

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for managing a user community, comprising:

defining a set of user attributes for each user in the user community;

and

identifying a permission level for managing each of the user attributes.

5 2. The method according to claim 1, wherein each permission level defines administrative operations that an administrator can and cannot perform on a user attribute.

3. The method according to claim 1, further comprising defining restricted values that an administrator can assign for the user attributes.

10 4. A method for managing user information associated with a user community, comprising:

defining a set of user attributes from the user information for each user
the user community;

identifying a permission level for each of the user attributes; and

15 managing the user attributes according to each of the permission levels.

5. The method according to claim 4, wherein each permission level defines operations that an administrator can and cannot be perform on a user attribute.

6. The method according to claim 4, further comprising defining restricted values that an administrator can assign for any of the user attributes.

7. A method for enabling an administrator to control administration of a user community, comprising:

providing user information associated with the user community to the administrator;

5 prompting the administrator to define a set of user attributes for each user in the user community;

prompting the administrator to identify a permission level for each of the user attributes; and

10 using the identified permission levels to control administration of the user information.

8. The method according to claim 7, wherein each permission level defines operations that the administrator can and cannot perform on a user attribute.

15 9. The method according to claim 8, further comprising prompting the administrator to define restricted values that the administrator can assign for any of the user attributes.

10. A user community administration tool for managing user information associated with a user community, comprising:

20 a domain definition component that defines the user community into at least one administrative domain, the domain definition component comprising a user group specifying component that specifies at least one arbitrary group of users from the user community and a user attribute definition component that defines a set of permissible user attributes for the at least one arbitrary group of users; and

an information management component that manages the user information associated with the administrative domain in accordance with the permissible user attributes.

11. The tool according to claim 10, wherein the user attribute definition component comprises an attribute permission component that specifies a permission level for each of the user attributes.

12. The tool according to claim 11, wherein each permission level defines operations that an administrator can and cannot perform on a user attribute.

13. The tool according to claim 10, wherein the user attribute definition component comprises an attribute restricted value component that defines restricted values that an administrator can assign for any of the user attributes.

14. The tool according to claim 10, further comprising an administrative privileges component that grants administrative privileges for the administrative domain.

15. The tool according to claim 14, wherein the administrative privileges component delegates the granted administrative privileges for the administrative domain.

16. A system for managing user information associated with a user community, comprising:

a database directory containing a plurality of user information;

a user community administration tool to manage the plurality of user information in the database directory; the user community administration tool comprising a domain definition component that defines the user community into at

least one administrative domain, the domain definition component comprising a user group specifying component that specifies at least one arbitrary group of users from the user community and a user attribute definition component that defines a set of permissible user attributes for the at least one arbitrary group of users; and an information management component that manages the user information associated with the administrative domain in accordance with the permissible user attributes; and

a first computing unit configured to serve the user community administration tool and the database directory.

17. The system according to claim 16, further comprising a second computing unit configured to execute the user community administration tool served from the first computing unit over a network.

18. The system according to claim 16, wherein the user attribute definition component comprises an attribute permission component that specifies a permission level for each of the user attributes.

19. The system according to claim 18, wherein each permission level defines operations that an administrator can and cannot perform on a user attribute.

20. The system according to claim 16, wherein the user attribute definition component comprises an attribute restricted value component that defines restricted values that an administrator can assign for any of the user attributes.

21. A user community administration tool for providing administration of a user community, comprising:

means for defining the user community into at least one administrative domain, the administrative domain definition means comprising means for specifying

at least one arbitrary group of users from the user community and means for defining a set of permissible user attributes for the at least one arbitrary group of users; and

means for managing the user information associated with the administrative domain in accordance with the permissible user attributes.

5 22. The tool according to claim 21, wherein the user attribute definition means comprises means for specifying a permission level for each of the user attributes.

23. The tool according to claim 22, wherein each permission level defines operations that an administrator can and cannot perform on a user attribute.

10 24. The tool according to claim 21, wherein the user attribute definition means comprises means for defining restricted values that an administrator can assign for any of the user attributes.

15 25. A computer-readable medium storing computer instructions for instructing a computer system to manage a user community, the computer instructions comprising:

defining a set of user attributes for each user in the user community;
and

identifying a permission level for managing each of the user attributes.

20 26. The computer-readable medium according to claim 25, wherein each permission level defines operations that an administrator can and cannot perform on a user attribute.

27. The computer-readable medium according to claim 25, further comprising instructions for defining restricted values that an administrator can assign for any of the user attributes.

5 28. A computer-readable medium storing computer instructions for instructing a computer system to enable an administrator to control administration of a user community, the computer instructions comprising:

providing user information associated with the user community to the administrator;

10 prompting the administrator to define a set of user attributes for each of the users in the user community;

prompting the administrator to identify a permission level for each of the user attributes; and

using the identified permission levels to control administration of the user information.

15 29. The computer-readable medium according to claim 28, wherein each permission level defines operations that the administrator can and cannot perform on a user attribute.

20 30. The computer-readable medium according to claim 28, further comprising instructions for prompting the administrator to define restricted values that the administrator can assign for any of the user attributes.